



Gator Times

USS NASSAU (LHA 4)

February 17, 2006

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Busy, But Still Time For Fun!



USN photo by PH3 Andrew King.

NASSAU conducts a replenishment at sea (RAS) with the French Navy ship FS Courbet (F 712), Feb. 8, 2006. Members of NASSAU's Deck Department performed all the necessary steps to transfer fuel to Courbet, while Helicopter Combat Support Squadron 28 (HSC-28) practiced Vertical Replenishment maneuvers. This evolution allowed NASSAU's crew to demonstrate their ability to successfully conduct operations with coalition forces as they continue to support Maritime Security Operations (MSO).

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Get Ready for the Return of 22 MEU Personnel



Sgt. Kentrell Davis of the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit, Special Operations Capable, talks to IT2 William Jones about his experience in Iraq.

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By CMDCM(SW/AW) R. Makowski

As I prepare my column for this issue of *Gator Times*, we are currently back on station, once again conducting Maritime Security Operations (MSO).

We are using this time to continue our preservation operations aboard the ship, while at the same time maximizing the use of our time to continue our training efforts.

Allotted time for training will become even more precious with the return of our MEU units because of the busy schedule ahead of us.

Although the cruise is well over half way complete, we still have many tasks to complete before we can enjoy the ride home.

The first big evolution is the safe return of the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (22 MEU). It will take us a while to bring them back aboard with all of their equipment, which brings me to the main point of this column.

We must prepare ourselves for the return of our brothers and sisters in arms. We are not the only ones who have had a tough past couple of months. We must remember that while we were in the safe and air conditioned bound-

aries of our ship, our Navy and Marine counterparts in country have been sleeping in tents in the deserts, mountains and other parts of the country, where they were in harm's way 24/7.

They have been shot at, attacked, and had to live on the edge, being ever vigilant for improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

Several shipmates who deployed with us will not be returning with us because of these devices.

When our Marines and Sailors ashore return to NASSAU, they will be in the safest place they have been in for months.

I ask all NASSAU Sailors to be extra tolerant of the longer lines and extra bodies now that we will once again be sharing our living space.

It will take some time to get our Marine brothers and sisters used to the routine of shipboard life, and you can help them out. Take some time to talk to them to see what they have had to endure over the past few months.

By sharing experiences, we will not only develop friendships but will make their transition back to shipboard life easier and faster.

I suggest you take a Marine to work with you some time. Let them see what your job is like, so they can see something new. They get bored just like you and I do sometimes, and seeing what you do every day may give them a new understanding of the Navy and what it is like to be a Sailor at sea. Best of all it may make your last few months of the deployment go by quicker.

I have been asked if we are going to have a Tiger Cruise on the way home. Well, let me tell you the planning is well into the works to make it happen. Right now we are working to get permission to have one, and hopefully we will soon get the good word and we will get the details out to the crew.

Things are looking good, but until we receive permission, we can not put out any more details. I am sure the Chaplain will be looking for volunteers once

See "MEU returns," page 11.

Who is in Charge?

By Chaplain David McElwain

Life at times does not go the way we want it to go. We lose the job we wanted, we fail to select for promotion, we deploy away from family and friends. Even though we intellectually know these are possibilities we do not expect them to happen, to us anyway.

The larger question we face is how do we respond when we encounter difficult times?

One way to respond is to let life steamroll us. We play the part of victim and begin to believe nothing good will happen in our lives. We give up control to whatever forces are there pushing us around. Fairly quickly we develop the mindset that we are helpless

and hopeless. An alternative is to do some reflection on our lives.

By thinking about our lives we can take responsibility for our choices and for the consequences of those choices. By being responsible we take control of what has happened and can learn valuable lessons for the future. Recognizing our lives are determined by our choices we exercise power when we make choices.

Even when people are in the worst situations they have the power to choose their attitude. Victor Frankl who was a prisoner in Nazi concentration camps tells the story of a man on a working party who chose to stop and look at the sunset as they returned to camp. Frankl urged him to move, knowing he would be beaten for stopping, yet the

Chaplain's Corner



man chose to stop and enjoy the sunset. Even in a situation totally out of his control he was responsible for his choice and took control of his life.

I do not envision any of us experiencing what Victor Frankl experienced. Our choices and lives are more ordinary than those of the death camp survivors. Yet we experience pain, sorrow, anxiety and hopelessness because of events in our lives.

We can learn from our own experiences and those of others, take responsibility and control of our lives, or we can just let things happen to us.

Which would you rather do?

Special Delivery for Valentine's Day!



The NASSAU Family Support Group recently sent a Valentine's Day banner that hung in the Hangar Bay for all crew members to view. Many families created their own squares, which were then sewn together to make the quilt. The project took two months to complete.

USN Photos by
PH2(AW) Susan Milton.

NASSAU Pollywogs Become Shellbacks

By JO1 Ardelle L. Purcell

Sailors on board USS NASSAU took part in an historical Navy tradition when the ship conducted a crossing the line ceremony while on deployment in support of Maritime Security Operations (MSO) in the 5th Fleet area of operations, Feb. 7, 2006.

Due to operational commitments, the traditional Shellback Ceremony celebrating that moment when a ship crosses the equator from the Northern Hemisphere to the Southern Hemisphere, known as “crossing the line,” took place when NASSAU returned to the Northern Hemisphere. The ceremony commemorates a Sailor’s first crossing of the equator on a Navy ship.

A traditional rite of passage cer-

emony carried out to appease King Neptune, the mythological god of the seas, the ceremony was originally created as a test for seasoned Sailors to ensure their new shipmates were capable of handling long, rough times at sea. Those who have already crossed the equator at a previous time during their Navy career are deemed “trustworthy shellbacks,” sons and daughters of Neptune. Those who have not are called “pollywogs.”

Despite the ship’s busy operational schedule, ABFCS(AW) Raymond Reynolds, the ceremony coordinator, was determined to conduct a safe and fun crossing the line ceremony.

“Becoming a shellback is a significant milestone in a Sailor’s career,” said Reynolds. “With less than 200 trustworthy shellbacks onboard and 1,000 polly-

wogs, I wanted to make sure we followed all the rules, guidance and directives for the crossing the line ceremony.”

According to Reynolds, while the ceremony was toned down compared to ceremonies from many years ago, it still hasn’t lost its meaning.

“The ceremony still has the same theme to it,” he said. “I wanted to make sure it still reflected our great naval traditions, the history of why we do the ceremony, and the rite of passage to say ‘I’m a shellback.’”

While West Coast ships routinely cross the equator on deployments, East Coast ships such as NASSAU, home ported in Norfolk, Va., face much greater odds of crossing the equator during a deployment. Due to commitments in support of MSO, this deployment pro-



USN photo by CTCR(SW) Robert Girod.

Three Shellbacks stand watch while they await the arrival of Davy Jones.

vided many Sailors with the opportunity of a lifetime.

"For me this was a first, believe it or not," said ABCM(AW/SW) Amos Harvey. "Being on an east coast vessel that rarely gets a chance to cruise into that part of the world, conducting a crossing the line ceremony was extremely important.

"After 24 years of naval service, five ships, six deployments, all on East Coast ships, I finally got the opportunity to participate in a crossing the line ceremony and can now say I'm a shellback," he said.

NASSAU Sailors had a good time while learning the history and tradition of crossing the line and becoming a shellback. The new memories of the ceremony are enough for a lifetime.

"We didn't cross the equator last cruise, but I heard a lot of stories about it," said SK3 Jayda O'Kelly. "I thought it was nice and extremely fun. I saw the kid in everyone who participated. I laughed a whole lot. It is definitely a memory I will hold on to for life. I can't wait to tell my son this story when I get home."



USN photo by CTRC(SW) Robert Girod.

King Neptune and his queen determine whether NASSAU's pollywogs have earned the title of Shellback.



USN photo by CTRC(SW) Robert Girod.

Several Shellbacks prepare for the day's events.

RAS Completed With Frigate FS Courbet



The French Navy ship FS Courbet (FS 712) makes way alongside NASSAU while connected during a replenishment at sea (RAS) conducted Feb. 8, 2006. The RAS proved NASSAU is capable of conducting a RAS with coalition ships attached to Commander Task Force (CTF) 150 while deployed to the 5th Fleet Area of Operations.

By JO1 Ardelle L. Purcell

USS NASSAU conducted a replenishment at sea (RAS) training evolution with the French Navy frigate Courbet (F 712), Feb. 8, while conducting Maritime Security Operations (MSO) in the 5th Fleet Area of Operations.

During the 52 minute training evolution, the two ships steamed side-by-side with NASSAU acting as the guide ship delivering fuel and Courbet receiving fuel.

According to BMCS(SW/AW)

David Randall, that's the reason this training evolution was so important to NASSAU's deck department.

"They use the same set-ups we do, but we don't normally send fuel," said Randall. "However, we are the biggest ship within this strike group, which means we have to be able to sustain other ships in our strike group at any given time when replenishments are not available."

Randall said this evolution gave Deck Department Sailors some valuable training in an evolution they are not normally required to do aboard

NASSAU.

"We are always receiving fuel instead of sending it," he said. "Today they practiced sending fuel, which has made our Sailors more efficient. Should we ever have to sustain other ships for operations, our Sailors now have the experience to carry out that tasking," he said.

Sailors not only gained a wealth of experience from this joint training evolution with the French frigate but they also had the opportunity to test NASSAU's rebuilt One Alpha station.

"The One Alpha station was rebuilt



USN photo by PH2(AW) Susan Milton.

SN David Bohannon from NASSAU's Deck Department signals French Navy ship FS Courbet (F 712) that all conditions are safe to begin fueling during the RAS.

just so we could support the strike group in case we had to send fuel," said BM1(SW/AW) James Gamble. "This was a milestone and an historical moment for NASSAU. It's been years since we actually did this, and now we know that if the need ever arises we would do it well. It was great training for everyone involved."

For BM2 Danny Baker, this was a new and rewarding experience.

"I have been a boatswain's mate for six years, but sending fuel was still a new experi-

ence for me and for several others in the Deck Department," said Baker. "We



USN photo by PH2(AW) Susan Milton.

became familiar with our fuel rig, we raised our proficiency level with our One

Alpha station and we had fun with the French Deck Department, so it was a great evolution for us all."

Conducting a RAS allows Nassau and other ships within Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) 8 to remain fully mission capable to carry out all assigned tasks while at sea for prolonged periods of time, possibly in areas of the world where friendly re-supply ports are not available. These replenishments allow for the transfer of fuel, ammunition, supplies and cargo from one ship to another.

NASSAU Crew Enjoys Seychelles Liberty



USN photo by PH2(AW) Susan Milton.

Kayaking, scuba diving and island tours were provided on Mahe Island for NASSAU crew members, thanks to the Morale, Welfare and Recreation Department.

By DM1 Charmin J. Covington

After more than 30 consecutive days at sea, USS NASSAU took time to visit the island of Mahe for some well-earned liberty, Feb. 2 - 6.

The visit gave crewmembers a chance to explore the island, located in the Seychelles Archipelago, north of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean.

Numerous Sailors partook in at least one of the five tours offered by Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) for Sailors looking for fun and adventure.

AM3 Glynn Koepke, assigned to the Training Department, enjoyed the Mahe Main Island tour.

"I was able to see this beautiful island and learn a lot about the island's history, their customs and their traditions on that tour," said Koepke.

HM2(SW) Elizabeth Walkes said the Seychelles reminded her of Barbados, her birthplace.

"It reminded me of what Barbados was like before I left the island back in 1984," she said. Walkes also enjoyed a



USN photo by PH2(AW) Susan Milton.

Victoria's town square includes a replica of Big Ben.



Many NASSAU crew members took advantage of overnight liberty to relax in a hotel with scenic views of the island. Spending a night off the ship is important for many Sailors to be able to get away from the ship and relax after several weeks of hard work at sea.

MWR-sponsored tour that included a ride on a glass bottom boat, swimming and snorkeling.

SKSN Jeison Aristizabal got a chance to meet some of the Seychellois by venturing away from the more popular locations.

"I enjoyed hiking to the side of the island where the locals live," said Aristizabal, originally from Columbia, South America. "I even found some of the same tropical fruits as you can find back home, like guava and passion fruits.

While hiking, Aristizabal got a chance to speak with a Seychelles native, who explained how the locals live off the environment.

"Most of their food is provided by the sea, so they take very good care of the water and the island," he said.

Command Master Chief Rick Makowski said the ship's crew duly earned this brief respite.

"They worked hard, they trained hard and they did a lot of maintenance in the last few weeks.

"They should all be proud of how they conducted themselves because they were outstanding ambassadors of NASSAU, the U.S. Navy and the United States," Makowski added.



The warm sandy beaches of Mahe Island proved a popular destination for NASSAU's Sailors.



Gator In The Spotlight

CS2 Brian Cook



USN photo by PH2(AW) Susan Milton.

Cook prepares a sheet cake for the farewell party of BMCS(SW/AW) David Randall.

Navy experience: 4 years, 8 months

Time on board: 4 years, 3 months

Hometown: Harpers Ferry, West Va.

Why did you decide to enlist in the Navy?

It was a combination of things. I wasn't ready to go to college yet. I didn't have the money, I needed discipline and I was immature. I also wanted to travel to Germany and Italy, although I haven't seen either one yet.

What made you want to be a Culinary Specialist?

I liked to cook. I love to bake cookies and bread. It makes me feel like I am doing something worthwhile when people come back to the bakery and let me know I need to make more because it's all gone. That means people are happy with my products.

My mother is a cook for Meals on Wheels in West

Virginia. I saw how much she liked doing that. Five of my family members in West Virginia also are bakers and cooks. All of them are females, so I am the only male in four generations to be a cook and baker. I wanted to be different.

What's the hardest part about your job?

It's all the long hours and the attitudes some people have, but you can't please everybody. Plus, it gets very hot in here when all the appliances are running.

What was the biggest surprise during boot camp?

I was ready for it all. My recruiter told me what to expect, what to know and memorize. I was surprised by how easy it was. But it was a long separation from my family.

Who is your role model and why?

My father. He has always worked hard to get to where he is in life. He never gave up on me in my teenage years when I had problems. I have a lot of respect for my father. He's proud of me because I was more responsible, mature and better able to handle my own life.

What are your hobbies?

I like to play basketball and football. I don't know if you would consider it a hobby, but I also like to play my Playstation 2.

What is your most memorable moment in the Navy?

I would have to say NASSAU's nine month cruise (Sept. 2003 to May 2004). It was a long time to be away from home, but I was promoted to third class petty officer and nominated as Blue Jacket of the Quarter during that cruise.

What advice would you give other junior Sailors?

Stay focused on your goals and keep yourself focused in your daily life. Whatever rules and regulations you have to follow now are there for a reason. Last but not least, don't judge the Navy by your last command because each one is different.

What are your future goals?

I have a lot of things I need to accomplish. First and foremost, I want my Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist pin. I am working on a degree in business management. I am planning on getting married in October and I want to retire after 20 years in the Navy.

February Focuses on Kid's Dental Health

Submitted by CAPT Michael Lewis

February is National Children's Dental Health Month. All over the USA, dentists and public health clinics sponsor activities designed to educate parents about the care of their children's teeth.

Since many of you are parents, you may have questions about dental care for your children. Be sure to look for the answers to frequently asked dental questions in the Plan Of The Day this month. Here are a few other questions and answers for you to think about.

Q. When should you bring your children in for their first dental visit?

A: No later than 12 months of age. Why? Fifty percent of all children have their first cavity by their first birthday. At this young age, the cavity will usually be small and the dental visit will be less threatening than if you wait until your child has a toothache, thus establishing a good relationship between dentist and child.

Q. When should you begin brushing your child's teeth?

A: As soon as your child gets the first tooth. Use a finger brush or damp washcloth without toothpaste to clean after every meal. Your child will like the feeling and this serves to relieve teething pain. Put your thumb as far back as you can on one side and your child cannot bite you. After your child's first birthday, you can use a pea-sized drop of toothpaste when you brush their

teeth. Continue brushing your child's teeth until they demonstrate that they can brush all surfaces on their own. Even then, close supervision is a must.

Q. When should you begin to floss your child's teeth?

A: As soon as there are no longer spaces between their teeth. As a test, put the floss between the closest two teeth. If the floss snaps through, the teeth are touching and need to be flossed because the brush can no longer reach between.

Q. When is your child old enough to floss solo?

A: When age 8 or older. Children do not develop manual coordination and dexterity enough to be able to floss on their own before the age of 8.

Q. Should you put your child to bed with a bottle?

A: *Absolutely not*, unless the bottle contains just water. Why? Any drink has sugar in it, which pools against the upper teeth during the night and results in rampant decay. If you must put your child to bed with a bottle containing other than just water, you must retrieve it after the baby falls asleep. Even sugar-free soft drinks can cause the teeth to rot because the acid-containing drink pools around the teeth at night.

Q. How often should you replace your child's toothbrush?

A: Every three to four months, especially if the bristles are frayed or worn. This goes for adults as well.

Q. How should you clean a tooth-

brush after use?

A: Simply rinse it off and allow it to air dry. Avoid keeping it in a closed container, which might encourage the growth of bacteria or mold. After an illness, it is a good idea to put your toothbrush in the dishwasher to disinfect it.

Q. What can you do to prevent or treat bad breath?

A: Bad breath can be caused by sulfur-producing bacteria in the mouth. You can freshen your breath by regularly removing these bacteria which collect on the tooth surfaces and in the nooks and crannies of the tongue. Brush your teeth and tongue at least twice a day for fresher breath, and floss at least once a day.

Q. What equipment should you provide for a child involved in contact sports?

A: In addition to the other required protective equipment, make sure your child has a well-fitting mouth guard. One size fits all mouth guards can be purchased from sporting goods stores, or, better yet, ask your dentist to make you or your child a custom fit mouth guard.

Q. What can the mother and father do to help prevent cavities in their children?

A: In addition to everything mentioned above, they should make sure they take care of their own teeth as well. Cavities are a preventable bacterial infection passed from parent to child, from generation to generation. Stopping this chain of events is simple. Make sure your mouth, and especially that of the mother or primary caregiver, is as clean and disease-free as possible before the child is born. The transmission of the disease from mother to child usually takes place between 6 months and 2 yrs of age through sharing of utensils and cups, and cleaning pacifiers with one's saliva.

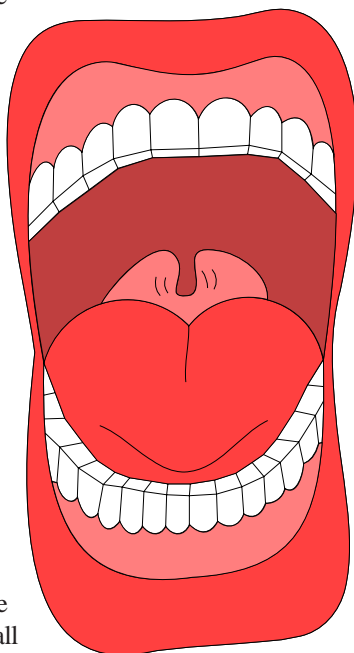
"MEU Returns," from page 2.

the preparation stage begins. I highly recommend you contact him if you are interested when the call for volunteers goes out.

As I close out this issue, I would like to call your attention to the celebration of African-American History Month. There are several events scheduled this month to raise the crew's awareness of the many accomplish-

ments of African Americans in our country's history.

As always, please double your efforts to concentrate on the job at hand, pay attention and complete the job the right way the first time. God Bless!



Bravo Zulu

CMC's Super Sailors Of The Day

4 Feb – SHSN Michael Thomas (Supply)
5 Feb – QMSN James Rogers (Nav.)
6 Feb – IC3 Andrew Mohr (C5I)
7 Feb – MMFN Victor Lemus (Eng.)
8 Feb – ABH3 Kirby Delarosa (Air)
9 Feb – GM3 Demetrius Sullivan (Weps)
10 Feb – SN Daniel Silva (Deck)
11 Feb – AN Marc Simmons (Supply)
12 Feb – SN Dale Furno (Security)
13 Feb – FC3 Grady Lowe (C5I)
14 Feb – MM3 Macmillan Frederick (Eng.)
15 Feb – AN Adrian Gamulo (Air)
16 Feb – CTR2 Mathew Stone (Ops)



Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist

AS1 Randy Barnes
AO1 Joshua Hill
IT1 Kelly Johnson
IT2 Dustin Boehm

IT2 James Green
BM2 Cherise Richardson
CTT3 Lawanika Davis
PC3 Charmaine Hamm
IT3 Ryan McCarthy
MMFN Hussein Meneses
ASAN Manual Palaguachi
BMSN Brian Ripoli
SN Frank Stachour
SN Ranez Tenchavez



Enlisted Aviation Warfare Specialist

IT1 Eugene Frye
AD1 Lorenzo Thomas
MA2 Corey Herring
IT2 Gerald Polite
AO3 Walter Adams
AT3 Brian Draper
IT3 Michael Freshwater
AO3 Joe Gomez
ASAN Jorge Loaiza
ATAN Robert Sutphin

Academic Skills Certificates

The following Sailors were presented certificates recognizing their completion of PACE courses.

AD1 Joseph Greathouse
AO1 Phillip Newsome
AS2 Cesar Cartagena
AS2 Geovani Flores
AN Antonio Diazgarcia
AN Jennamarie Hunt
MMFN Hussein Meneses
YNSN William West

CFC Letters Of Appreciation

LT Norman Johnson
AM1 French Grimes
SH1 Peter Matos
AO1 Phillip Newsome
IS1 Jose Pereles
ET1 Terry Russell
AE1 Edwin Santiago
YN2 Tadarrieo Atkins
MA2 Michael Kendrick
QMSN Lora Rape
YNSN Heidi Romine

Tiger Cruise has been approved!

Shipmates with dependents should watch for more details to be announced soon for NASSAU's Tiger Cruise on the last night at sea before returning to Norfolk.

Watch for POD announcements and notices via e-mail!